

# *Venezuelan Ombudsman Denies Reports Of Torture*

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Caracas, March 4 (RHC) -- Venezuela's Ombudswoman, Gabriela Ramirez, said that she has not received any report of cases of torture during violent incidents in the country.

In an interview published Monday by Ciudad Caracas newspaper, Ramirez said that some sectors wanted to deceive people into believing that there are cases of torture in the nation, as part of "a sinister media scheme" to discredit the government and incite violence.

It is obvious that this campaign has the objective of equating Venezuela's government with a neo-Pinochetist regime, and therefore the Ombudsman's Office would be discredited, stated Ramirez.

She explained that her human rights institution has received just 42 reports of alleged damages to physical integrity, mostly as a result of forceful arrests of individuals committing violent actions.

She added that "in such situations, people can get injured because they may be running and fall or they are forcibly detained."

She said they are mostly people who have been blocking roads, burning tires, setting up barricades, and committing crimes punishable under the penal code.

Meanwhile, violence continued on Monday after dozens of protesters in a middle-class district threw rocks and firebombs at riot police, who retaliated with tear gas. Protesters in masks also ripped up a dead tree from a vacant lot and dragged it down the street to build a barricade in the neighborhood. Three people were reportedly detained in the clashes.

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